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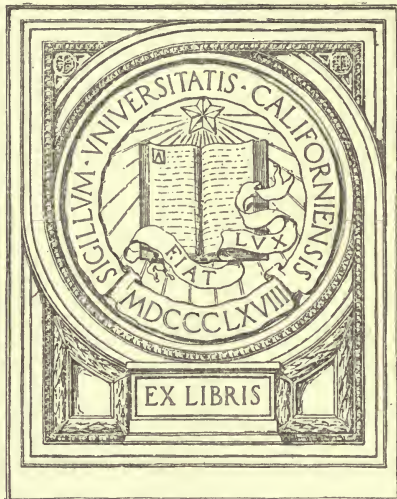
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The Angels appearing to the
Shepherds, by Velazquez
M. H. Spielmann

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“THE ANGELS APPEARING TO
THE SHEPHERDS”

By VELAZQUEZ



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THE ANGELS APPEARING TO THE SHEPHERDS
BY
VELAZQUEZ

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“THE ANGELS APPEARING TO THE SHEPHERDS”

BY

VELAZQUEZ

A CRITICAL STUDY

BY

M. H. SPIELMANN, F.S.A.

LONDON: THE MEDICI SOCIETY LTD.

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“THE ANGELS APPEARING TO THE SHEPHERDS”

(“Les Anges apparaissant aux Bergers”)

By VELAZQUEZ

I

T may well seem an incomprehensible thing that at the present day when collectors, experts, and dealers are scouring Europe and searching every nook and cranny for any fine picture that may be lying *perdu*, one of the most important compositions by one of the greatest of the world's masters may be offered for sale in the principal auction-room of the British Empire and yet escape recognition by its frequenters. A combination of circumstances contributed to this result when, in July 1912, the picture known as “Les Anges apparaissant aux Bergers”¹—which for many years had occupied an honoured place in the Louvre—was offered for sale after a lapse of half a century. Not easily seen beneath a layer of dirt and old discoloured varnish, hung on the days preceding the sale above a cabinet in a corridor more often devoted to the display of furniture and china than of oil-paintings, and likely to be

¹ In the catalogue of the Musée du Louvre it was entered thus: “VELAZQUEZ DE SILVA (DON DIEGO) . . . 153. Apparition des Anges aux Bergers. Haut. 1 m. 80 c.—Larg. 1 m. 25 c.”

In English measurement, 70 inches by 49 inches.

missed by picture-seekers accustomed to proceed straight into the principal picture-galleries, this large canvas was overlooked by most. And to add to this curious mischance, the work, being too large to be placed upon the easel on the day of sale, had been leaned against the wall behind the auctioneer with a still larger canvas in front of it—so that it came into close view for the first time when it was lifted upon the table for the brief moment during which the bidding took place. The description of it in the catalogue (quite accurate and full as far as it went) was evidently doubted by the languid buyers who attended—it was a week or two after Midsummer-day when most amateurs had left town who could—and it was knocked down to the one person present who believed, in spite of the dull indifference of the small public, that beneath the veil of obscurity lay the genuine work of the Spanish master; and thus it came into my possession.

In the first half of the nineteenth century two noteworthy collections of pictures were formed of the Spanish School—the first for King Louis Philippe, and the other for Mr. Frank Hall Standish,¹ of Duxbury Hall, Lincolnshire (whom Lawrence painted as a lad in Lord Cranbrook's picture known as "The Red Boy," which was sold in June, 1912). The same agents were employed by both collectors. Louis Philippe's *Galerie Espagnole*, says Stirling-Maxwell,² "was formed in Spain by Baron Taylor³ for the ex-King Louis Philippe soon after the Revolution of 1830. Many

¹ Author of several works, one of them: "Seville and its Vicinity." 8vo. London, 1840.

² "Annals of the Artists of Spain," 1848.

³ Curtis ("Velazquez and Murillo," 1883) states that the painter Dauzats acted with Baron Taylor as "the principal agents & advisers of the King." While in Seville with the Baron, Dauzats copied the large "St. Juan de Dios" by Murillo.

of the best pictures were bought from Don Julian Benjamin Williams, British Consul at Seville," whom Richard Ford described as "the best judge of Spanish paintings in the country,"¹ and to whom Mr. Standish dedicated his book on Seville, "in acknowledgement of the aid he has afforded to his countrymen in the cultivation of the fine Arts." "The pictures," says Redford,² "were most of them obtained for the King by M. le Baron Taylor, who was a sort of general art-factotum at Paris during this reign"—a description which, though doubtless a little wanting in delicacy or elegance, is true enough.

Vapereau (2nd ed. 1861) says: "Le roi Louis-Philippe confia aussi au Baron Taylor d'importantes missions, telles que celle de retrouver en Espagne les chefs-d'œuvre que les Alliés nous avaient enlevés ou de recueillir en Angleterre le musée Standish." This is not wholly correct: for it is evident that so far from confining himself to his mission as described, he collected a considerable number of works, both for the King and for Mr. Standish, which had had their permanent home in Spain; and, moreover, it was not through any dealings of his that the Standish collection became the inheritance of the King. Richard Ford³ declared that the astute Julian Williams, a good consul-general and a still better judge of art, did not hesitate to enrich his wonderful collection by buying pictures from priests and sacristans, asking no questions. He assumed a naïveté if he had it not; and thus, for nominal prices and with an easy conscience, he

¹ "Hand-Book of the History of the Spanish & French Schools of Painting," by Sir Edmund Head, Bart., 1848, p. xi.

² "Art Sales," 1888, vol. i, p. 147.

³ (1796-1858); author of the "Handbook for Travellers in Spain" (1846), of whom the "Dictionary of National Biography" states that "His articles first brought Velazquez into notice in England." He reported the sale of the Standish Collection for "The Athenaeum," 11 June 1853.

obtained many a genuine masterpiece which had decorated churches and chapels and which, in those troublous times, amid the disturbance and confusion that prevailed, were never missed by the careless ones in power.

"Mr. Standish," continues Stirling-Maxwell, "likewise purchased largely from Mr. Williams, from whom he obtained the Count of Aguila's¹ fine collection of Spanish drawings, probably the most important ever formed." The pictures actually numbered 251—though according to the catalogue, 244. The extra numbers were written in, in some of the copies.

When Mr. Standish died in 1841 (in 1840 according to the "Dictionary of National Biography") he bequeathed his entire collection of pictures, drawings, prints, and books to King Louis Philippe "as a testimony of my esteem for a generous and polite nation, which is always ready to welcome travellers, and which I have always visited with pleasure and quitted with regret." Curtis (p. 5) gives currency to the story, repeated by later writers, even in authoritative works, to the effect that Mr. Standish willed his collections to the King out of pique, in consequence of the manner in which a hint by him—the offer of them to the British nation contingent on the revival of the baronetcy which had once been in his family—had been received by Lord Melbourne. But this is untrue. It ignores the denial published by Mr. Standish's solicitors in Bolton, in the year 1841, wherein the following words occur: "In justice to his memory we feel

¹ From the Count del Aguila the Baron Taylor bought for the King's Spanish gallery Zurbaran's picture formerly attributed to Velazquez—"The Adoration of the Shepherds"—now in the National Gallery, and latterly credited by Dr. August L. Mayer to Pablo Legote (d. after 1662). It had been in the Count's house in Seville since the time it was painted. (See Curtis, p. 4.) The King also acquired from del Aguila Murillo's "Virgin and Child" (de la Faja), afterwards the Duc de Montpensier's, for the sum of 60,000 frs.

called upon decidedly to contradict the assertion that he offered his pictures to the Government of this country, as an inducement for the revival, in his person, of the extinct baronetcy. Not only would his high sense of honour have prevented his entertaining such a design, but the fact is, that the bequest to the King of the French was contained not only in the present, but in the previous, will of Mr. Standish, made so long ago as the year 1831; and we have reason to know that he never contemplated its revocation."¹

King Louis Philippe exhibited both collections in the Louvre, the Galerie Espagnole in 1838 and the Standish Collection in 1842.² The Standish Collection filled no fewer than sixteen rooms, four of which were devoted to the pictures. Prominent among these was "The Angels appearing to the Shepherds," No. 153 in the catalogue of the Gallery. It is described, No. 7, in Curtis's "Velazquez and Murillo," the *catalogue raisonné* of the works of the two masters of Spain.

In the Louvre it remained until the year 1853.³ Louis Philippe on his flight from France after the Revolution of 1848 retired to England and at once set up a claim with the French Government for all his loans to the Louvre on the ground that they were private and personal property.⁴ After

¹ Printed in the "Art Union," 1841, p. 49, but apparently hitherto overlooked.

² See "Notice des Tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole exposés dans les salles du Musée Royal au Louvre" (12mo, Paris, 1838), and "Catalogue des Tableaux, Dessins et Gravures de la Collection Standish, légués au Roi par M. Franck Hall Standish" (12mo, Paris, 1842).

³ Stirling-Maxwell enters it in his reference-note as "Paris. Ex-King of the French. Louvre, Standish Collection. No. 153."

⁴ "Although this bequest was, in a strict sense, private and personal, his Majesty placed it in the Louvre for the use and pleasure of the public. Now

five years—three years after the ex-Monarch's death—the claim was allowed, and the pictures on their arrival in London were sent forthwith for sale to Christie's. The Spanish Gallery was sold on the 6th, 7th, 13th, 14th, 20th, and 21st of May 1853, and the Standish Collection on the 28th and 30th of May.¹ It was on Monday, the 30th, that Velazquez's "Angels appearing to the Shepherds" (the date "May 28/53," the originally intended day, still remains in chalk upon the stretcher) was disposed of: it was No. 219 in the Catalogue.

"The pictures," says Curtis, "were hastily and carelessly packed, their surfaces pasted over with newspapers, and they were consigned to Messrs. Christie, Manson, and Woods." [The name of the firm at that time, of course, was "Christie and Manson."] "They arrived in an injured state; some were damaged by sea-water, many were without frames, or with only narrow strips of gilt wood. They were badly catalogued, the circumstances and the times were unfavourable, and at the sale few of the objects realized their full value." An unimportant injury occurred in "The Angels appearing to the Shepherds," at the right-hand extremity of the flowing drapery held up by the little

that the affairs of the ex-royal family have undergone so material a change, the Standish Collection is to be withdrawn from the Gallery and will shortly be transported to London, where it is expected to form an important feature in the public sales of the ensuing season," etc.—*Art Journal*, 1848, pp. 368-9. Owing to dispute and formalities, however, the delivery was delayed until early in 1853.

¹ The usual records give the days as the 27th and 28th and the date was so printed in the catalogue; but the sale was postponed, and a slip was stuck over the first-named date in a portion of the issue. There were two editions of the catalogue—one in English, and the other in French for the use of the foreign collectors and dealers. An introduction explained, in the name of the heirs of the recently defunct ex-king, that the sale was ordered, as a matter of financial necessity, by the Orleans family.

flying angels, and two other small points on the left, together with a touch on the instep of the left-hand figure: otherwise the picture appears to be in an absolutely sound condition. Nevertheless, it was knocked down to "that fine connoisseur of old pictures," as "The Times" calls him, the Rev. W. J. Davenport Bromley, for but £399¹—"A large sum when compared to 93 gs. paid on Saturday for the 'St. John' whose originality cannot be doubted." ("The Athenæum," 11 June 1853.)

While it was in the important collection of the Rev. Mr. Bromley it was seen again by Dr. Waagen, who wrote:² "Since I visited Wooton Park, Mr. Davenport Bromley has acquired some Spanish pictures from the Louis Philippe and Standish collections, of which, having known them formerly in Paris, I give a short account:

"... Velazquez: 'The Annunciation to the Shepherds.' Boldly realistic in heads and forms, and the contrast between the garish lights and black shadows very strong; but admirably painted in solid impasto (Standish Collection)." At Mr. Bromley's death the collection was sold at Christie's; the white chalk-mark on the stretcher "82 June 12/63,"

¹ The highest prices fetched in this rather disastrous sale are the following: No. 31, WATTEAU, "La Comédie Italienne," £735 (now in the Wallace Collection, identified as by Lancret); No. 114, MURILLO, "The Child Jesus asleep on the Knees of Joseph," £399 (Hoskins—Curtis 353, Manchester Exhibition, 1857, lent by Moore, and latterly in the possession of M. Kleinberger of Paris); No. 219, VELAZQUEZ, "*The Angels appearing to the Shepherds*," £399 (Rev. W. J. Davenport Bromley—Curtis 7); No. 222, VELAZQUEZ, "The Infante Don Balthasar Carlos" (Curtis 135—now No. 12 in the Wallace Collection), £1,680; No. 232, MURILLO, "Portrait of the Artist," £346 (Graves—Curtis 466—acquired by William Marshall of Eaton Square and sold by his heir, John W. Marshall, in 1810.

² "Art Treasures in England," vol. iii, p. 380, on the Collection of Mr. Davenport Bromley at Wooton Hall, near Ashbourne, where the Velazquez under consideration hung in the dining-room.

still notifies the date—for chalk is singularly persistent.¹ The catalogue records, what is obvious enough, that it is “an early work of Velazquez,” and asserts that “it was purchased by Baron Taylor for King Louis Philippe from the Count de Aguila,” thus ignoring the name of the intermediary Mr. Williams and his collection. According to Redford² Lord Bath was the purchaser; while “The Times” and “Art Journal” contemporary reports give it to Lord Ashburton, the third Baron. The present Marquess of Bath has no knowledge of the picture having been in his family. Lord Ashburton has met inquiry with silence. A positive clue to the purchaser is to be found in Christie’s original sale catalogue, which gives the name (or destination) as “Bathouse.”³ As two of the Botticellis purchased at the same sale (see below) by “Bathouse” were afterwards known to have been in the possession of Lord Ashburton, the significance of the pseudonym is sufficiently clear. It need scarcely be mentioned that Bath House was at that time Lord Ashburton’s town residence, and that “Bathouse” was

¹ See the Catalogue of the Wallace Collection, 1913 (edited by Mr. D. S. MacColl, M.A., LL.D.), in which it is stated that Lancret’s “Italian Comedians” (No. 465), also from the Standish Collection, likewise bears the date of sale marked in chalk upon its stretcher.

² “Art Sales,” vol. ii, p. 271. M. Paul Lefort (“Velazquez.” Paris, 1888, p. 141) catalogues the picture, and the sales of it, in his list of “Les Principales Peintures de Velazquez.”

³ Seven other pictures were acquired by the same mysterious collector: No. 45, Vincenzo Pagani di Monte Rubiano (“The Annunciation”); No. 50, Signorelli (“Figure of Joseph”); No. 78, Simone Memmi (“A Youthful Saint”), formerly in the Ottley Collection; No. 80, Botticelli (whole-length of “Venus holding a Garland of Roses”); No. 85, Botticelli (“Virgin and Child and young Saints”); No. 162, Girolamo Cotignola (“Altar-piece”); and No. 70, Botticelli (whole-length of “Venus”). As several of these were seen a few years ago at Melchet Court, the residence of the late Louisa Lady Ashburton, the identity of the collector may thus be averred.

an invention designed by the auctioneers to conceal their client's identity. The fiction of the "Lord Bath" purchase has recently been maintained merely owing to Redford's initial error; but that the picture entered Lord Ashburton's collection there is no doubt. It passed thence by gift into the collection of the late Lady Ashburton, and when the contents of Melchet Court were brought to the hammer "on the premises" by Messrs. Phillips, Son, and Neale, it was Lot 1,431 in the Catalogue, on the seventh day of the sale (26 September 1911). It was then strangely catalogued as by Murillo—whose work, even in his first period, reveals no real affinity with it. And it was thus curiously described: "Figure of a man asleep, with 2 other figures of watching angels, and sheep watering." Little wonder that the picture was not identified by London readers of the catalogue! "The name of the purchaser was given as Baron von Gründherr, who was for a time a frequent buyer of pictures in England. . . . The name of the owner of the picture when it appeared at Christie's on April 19, 1912, is veiled under the designation of 'the property of a gentleman,' but we believe that the buyer at Melchet Court is identical with the vendor at Christie's."¹

II

Since the year 1863 the picture, the whereabouts of which was so strangely obscured, had not been publicly seen, so that it is unfortunate that it could not be studied by the late Aureliano de Beruete, who, in his own words, "had the opportunity of examining several pictures by the

¹ From an article by Mr. William Roberts on "The Angels appearing to the Shepherds" by Velazquez, in "The Times," 15 August 1913.

master until now unknown." These, of course, include "Christ and the Pilgrims of Emmaus,"¹ formerly in the collection of Don Manuel de Soto, of Zurich, and now in America; "St. Peter seated on a Rock," belonging to the critic Aureliano de Beruete himself; and "The Virgin delivering the Chasuble to St. Ildefonso," in the Archbishop's Palace at Seville. There remain for discovery the pictures, enumerated by de Beruete, which may have escaped the burning of the Alcazar in 1734, together with the other paintings mentioned by Palomino, Ponz, and Ceán Bermudez, which, in de Beruete's words, "we must consider as lost." And he adds: "Several works of his younger days have disappeared," etc.

"The Angels² appearing to the Shepherds" constitutes, then, the fourth religious picture by Velazquez which has in recent years come to light. Distinguished by the early characteristic of "un clair-obscur très vigoureux et un relief accusé,"³ the picture clearly belongs, in my opinion, to the time when the first period was developing into the second. But this brilliancy of the illumination is due not solely to the painter's predilection in his early years, when he was more or less influenced by Ribera for strong effects of lighting, but rather, it may be assumed, to the literal translation of the text of the Gospel—"and the glory of the Lord shone round about them"; just as the attitude and expression of the principal watcher follow the words "and they were sore afraid"; while his companion in the background opens his mouth to exclaim in astonishment.

¹ A picture thus entitled, and "attributed to Velazquez," was in the Louis-Philippe-Standish Sale of 1853, No. 223—perhaps the version reproduced by the Arundel Society in photography, and now in Scotland.

² Not "Angel" as misprinted by Redford from the correct description in Christie's catalogue, and copied by subsequent writers.

³ A. de Beruete, "Velazquez," 1898 edition, p. 26.



THE ANGELS APPEARING TO THE SHEPHERDS. (? 1622. According to
Dr. August Mayer, 1618-1619.)

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From the principal figure in "The Angels appearing to the Shepherds," showing the spots of light upon the finger-tips and palm of the hand, and upon the face and ear (? 1622).



From the principal figure in "Christ and the Pilgrims of Emmaus," showing the spots of light upon the finger-tips and palm of the hand, and upon the face and ear (? 1621). (Reproduced from "Velazquez," by A. de Beruete: by permission of Messrs. Methuen and Co.)



Open-mouthed figure (in shadow)
in "The Angels appearing to the
Shepherds," with marked inequality
of nostrils.



Open-mouthed figure in "The
Musicians " (c. 1619), with
marked inequality of nostrils.



Realistic, gnarled hand of the
principal figure in "The Angels
appearing to the Shepherds."



Realistic, gnarled hand of the
figure of a peasant at right in
"Los Borrachos."

In its illustration of the custom and duties of the Biblical shepherd the picture is curiously accurate. It shows the artist conversant with the life and practice of a pursuit which was not without its dangers, and which in consequence was provided with elaborate means of defence and protection against the foe, whether man or brute. He shows us here how, when the sheep had been driven at night within the enclosure or cavernous space—preferably one in which there was a running stream for the watering of the flock—the shepherd “watched at the entrance of the fold throughout the night, acting as porter (the Gospel of St. John, x, 3). The shepherd’s office thus required great watchfulness, particularly by night (the Gospel of St. Luke, ii, 8, cf. Nahum, iii, 18).” And again: “A watchful care has to be maintained by shepherds in the East, as well throughout the night as by day, lest the flock should suffer from wild beasts of the forest, or from the assaults of men as wild—the roving foragers of the desert.”

The composition consists of four figures—one of whom is still asleep and almost invisible in the background beyond the sleeping figure in front—with two flying child-angels above, supporting a fluttering drapery. In front, two sheep are drinking at running water; a third stands beside them, and the heads of two more occupy the centre of the picture. The raised hand of the shepherd in the foreground is brought into strong relief, not so much by its being silhouetted against the sombre early morning sky, as by the touches of brilliant light that fall upon the tips of the fingers and thumb and upon the palm. Here we have an exact counterpart of the hand raised by the young man in Don Manuel de Soto’s former possession, “Christ and the Pilgrims of Emmaus”: the similarity is here so striking—

not less in the brilliant touches of light upon the face of the chief figure—that the definitive significance of the fact, as a piece of confirmatory evidence, need hardly be insisted on.

The naked foot, so admirable in drawing, is observed and realized with the care and truth we see in those of "St. Peter" (in the picture now belonging to Don A. de Beruete) and "St. John in Patmos" (Mr. Laurie Frere).

The man with the open mouth corresponds with him (who also occupies the centre) in "The Musicians" in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum. That he is the same model is suggested by the fact that in both heads—as is revealed by the up-turned attitude—the same irregularity of the nostrils, amounting almost to a deformity, is clearly represented, so close is the imitation from the life. Moreover, he is here placed in half-shadow—a device for securing depth and mystery such as is also employed in the Duke of Wellington's "Water-Carrier of Seville," and in the "Pilgrims" of the same period, and in some measure, too, in "The Forge of Vulcan" of ten years later.

As in the "St. Peter," "St. John," "The Adoration of the Magi" (in the Prado), and "The Vintager," and again in the "Mercury and Argus" of 1651-1660 (Prado), and even in some degree in what was probably the artist's last work, "St. Anthony and St. Paul" or "The Holy Hermits" in the same gallery, the chief mass of the composition is placed against a dark background while the dawn, or daylight, or other space of light, occupies the left-hand portion of the picture, near or at the top. The same contrast, the same scheme and principle of chiaroscuro in a composition reversed, are seen in a work otherwise so dissimilar as "Christ in the House of Martha." And in the words applied by de Beruete to "Christ and the Pilgrims," "the heads, hands, and



"The Angels appearing to the Shepherds" (1622).

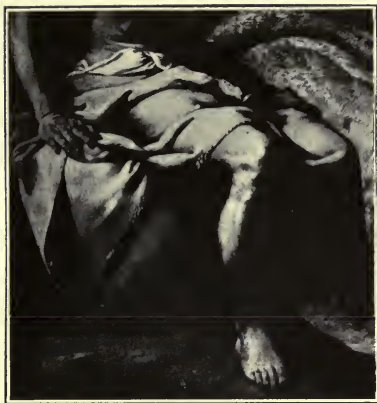


"St. Peter" (c. 1621).
(From "Velazquez," by A. de Beruete:
by permission of Messrs. Methuen
and Co.)



"The Adoration of the Magi"
(1619).

Showing the arrangement by which, at this period, the artist placed his principal figure or group against a dark background, with the sky breaking into dawn near the top corner of the composition.



From the principal figure in "The Angels appearing to the Shepherds," showing an arrangement similar to that in "Los Borrachos": namely, flesh, white drapery, heavy coloured drapery, one leg showing, the other covered, and one foot displayed (? 1622).



From the principal figure in "Los Borrachos," showing the same arrangement (1629).

draperies are modelled with great relief, and with the care peculiar to the first manner of the artist."

The draperies display the characteristics of Velazquez's work, not only of the first manner, but also of the early second. "It is noteworthy," says Justi, in speaking of the religious pictures, "that the hitherto employed thin draperies, falling in sharp, straight, parallel, or broken lines, are already exchanged for stout fabrics, which fall in broad, heavy folds." Not only are thickness and heaviness the characteristic, but quality also, in nearly every picture (not a portrait) of this date, and thenceforward for many years—as in "Joseph's Coat" of 1630 and "Los Borrachos" of the year before. Indeed, it is almost startling to find how in the latter the arrangement against flesh of the upper white drapery and the lower coloured drapery below it across the thighs of the principal figure—leaving one of the knees exposed, and only one foot showing—is in obvious harmony with that, also in respect of the chief actor in the scene, in "The Angels appearing to the Shepherds." An identity of arrangement such as this is curiously confirmatory. Something of the same disposition of drapery is to be found in the figure of Jacob in "Joseph's Coat"; and in the "St. John" and "St. Peter" we see not only a like character in the folds, but the same individual treatment of the edge of the material.

And here, too, we find a pretty close approach to what de Beruete calls "the magnificent folds and draperies" of "The Adoration of the Magi," and the same quality of light and shadow as well. Another detail in "The Adoration" is to be seen in "The Angels," namely, the broken angular fold—what French sculptors call an *œil*—at the elbow of the Virgin in the one picture and at that of the central figure in the other; and it is repeated in the "Immaculate Conception" belonging to Mr. Frere.

M. Bonnat's remark (in his Preface to the French edition of de Beruete's book) to the effect that Velazquez was such an uncompromising realist that he would "reproduce with rapid fidelity the first ignoble form that happened to meet his eye" is seen not only in the misshapen nostrils which have already been mentioned, but also in the ill-formed and gnarled fingers of the shepherd's labour-deformed hand—the counterpart of which we have in the knot-knuckled fingers of the man on the extreme right in "Los Borrachos."

What enables us best to date the picture, perhaps, is the portrait of a model who appears, modified according to necessity, in several of the early pictures of Velazquez. It is he who is seen sleeping on the right, his head comfortably resting on his hands—a miracle of execution. For example, he appears to be the man in the "Breakfast" of the Hermitage; more dignified, he is possibly, according to some, "The Water-Carrier of Seville," and more refined, one of the three Magi in "The Adoration" at the Prado. That cannot positively be asserted. But he is unquestionably the foreground figure seen in profile, now become an older man in "The Drinkers." If, as we may suppose, Velazquez was here more or less faithful to nature, according to his wont, the man in "The Angels appearing" was some six or eight years younger than the weather-beaten rascal of "The Drinkers"—judged by the whiteness of hair and texture of flesh. If this be true, having regard to the known date of the last-named work—1628-9—we may take the year 1622 (in the interval, that is to say, of the artist's first and second visits to Madrid) as that in which "The Angels appearing to the Shepherds" was painted. The assumption thus receives confirmation.¹

¹ But see, later, the approximate dates suggested by Dr. Mayer of Munich, and by Sir Walter Armstrong.



From "The Angels appearing to the Shepherds"
 (? 1622). The sleeping figure painted from the
 model who sat for the profile head in "Los
 Borrachos," as shown below.



THE
 BORRACHOS

From "Los Borrachos" (1629).

And it may also be held, as I have suggested, that the singer in "The Musicians" is the same model as he who looks up from his drowsy vigil in the middle distance of "The Angels appearing." If the attitude of this latter figure be not carefully considered in relation to the action of the scene, it might be regarded, by some at least, as a Raphaelesque pose, an Italianate idea; but if it be noticed that while two men are still asleep, the two guards have been stirred from their watching by the miracle before them, and are in different stages of alertness, the attitude explains itself as a natural one, the reverse of conventional, and characteristic of no particular school.

III

The flying child-angels with their floating drapery constitute a feature almost unique in the unchallenged œuvre of the master. Angels were scarcely in the line of the great imaginative realist. The winged standing angel in "Christ at the Column" has about it little that is ethereal, and still less that is *mouvementé*, and would probably be a creation of 1630. We must wait for another twenty years—c. 1652—for "The Coronation of the Virgin" at the Prado for further presentation of flying child-angels and cherubim. The character of the faces is much the same in both pictures, though the treatment of the hair is utterly different. But during the thirty years that had elapsed between the painting of the two pictures, Velazquez may well have revised his conceptions somewhat in respect of these spiritual beings. It may be hazarded that as Velazquez had married Pacheco's daughter four years before—in 1618—he used his first-born as his model, that is to say, his daughter, Francisca, who married Juan Bautista del Mazo in 1634.

It has been curiously remarked that characteristic

though these little figures may be of the Spanish master, the conception suggests an inspiration from Rubens. Conceivably this may be so. Just as we can scarcely doubt that there is a good deal more than coincidence in the striking similarity—which Justi makes a futile attempt to explain away—between the chief group in "The Surrender of Breda" (1638-41), together with horse and crossing lances to the left, and those in Rubens's "Meeting of Ferdinand, King of Hungary, and the Cardinal Infante at Nordlingen" (1634-5) at Vienna, his "Reconciliation of Esau and Jacob" (1615-18) in the Munich Pinakothek, as well as in his "Meeting of Abraham and Melchisedech" (1626-28) belonging to the Duke of Westminster—whether seen by Velazquez in sketch or engraving need not be discussed—so, we may believe, might he possibly have been influenced by the sight of such a group from the hand of Rubens. But was there such a one?

Rubens's first visit to Spain was in 1603, when Velazquez was not yet out of the nursery. Before 1600, we are told, he had painted the "Annunciation" now in the Hof Museum at Vienna; that work contains floating angels with drapery in an attitude very similar, especially in the juxtaposition of the heads. It can hardly be suggested that this picture was carried by Rubens to Valladolid with the others that he took with him, for the history is pretty well known. But it is recorded that while he was eating his heart out in that city awaiting the return of the Court, the Fleming occupied his time in painting, among other things, another "Assumption" which Velazquez may have seen—either itself or some copy of it—on his first visit to Madrid nineteen years later. Again, a couple of winged boys with a floating drapery flutter near the upper edge of "The Adoration of the Magi" in the Prado. It may, or it may not, be significant; most probably not. It is all the purest conjecture—but so, too, is the sug-

gestion that these well-proportioned and perfectly natural boys are inspired by any group of Rubens's marvels of chubby rotundity.

More likely is it that the inspiration—if such it was—was derived from El Greco's "Annunciation" at that time at San Vicente in Toledo, painted and placed there before Velazquez was born. It is more than probable that Velazquez saw this picture on his first journey to Madrid early in 1622, for Toledo is the last stopping-place before the capital is reached. Indeed, de Beruete, speaking of the influence exercised upon the painter by El Greco's works, observes: "He doubtless saw and studied them at Toledo, where there are to-day about sixty, and where at that epoch nearly all his works must have been collected. Velazquez, who had avoided the influence of Rubens, and escaped the seductions of the Venetians, doubtless found in El Greco something superior, which he tried to assimilate." And he draws attention to the fact that Palomino, in the first half of the eighteenth century, had expressed the same opinion. Furthermore, he bears witness to "the adoption by Velazquez of certain silvery grey tints in the colouring, and the use of *special carmines*"—which is just what we find, more particularly, in the finger-tips of the little floating figures in "The Angels appearing."

And yet the picture, taken as a whole, appears to have been painted under the direct influence of Ribera. Pacheco, teacher of Velazquez and his father-in-law, tells us that the close study of nature which laid the foundations not only of Velazquez's merits but of his defects—and made upon him "a deep and indelible impression—warped him from Raffaele and Michel Angelo to Ribera and Stanzione." Justi (p. 179), while endorsing Pacheco's assertion that "my son-in-law follows the same path," points out that by 1630

Velazquez had got rid of his dark manner which "was closely related to the style of Ribera, whom he even imitated."

This impress of Ribera upon Velazquez in the latter's early years is now universally acknowledged. Take "Los Borrachos" of 1629—(I give the date of the payment for the picture recorded in the Royal Archives in Madrid). The artist had now become entirely himself. Yet we are told that "the subject, style, and colouring offer some resemblance to the celebrated picture of 'Silenus' in the Naples Gallery, painted by Ribera in 1626":¹ that is to say, to a picture of at least two years earlier.

Now, this was before Velazquez made his first journey to Italy and consequently before he could personally have met with Ribera who had certainly left Valentia when the young Sevillian was only about seventeen years of age and as yet unknown as a painter. But it must not be supposed that Ribera's works were out of his reach for study and assimilation. The imitation revealed in "Los Borrachos" affords evidence of it; while, as for proof positive, we have it on record that in 1620—the year in which Ribera was appointed Court painter to the Spanish Viceroy in Naples, and two years before the "Angels Appearing to the Shepherds" was painted—"the Duke of Osuna had, after his return from Naples, brought that artist's works to his family seat, and to the local collegiate church containing the family vaults."² This estate of the ex-Viceroy was actually in the province of Seville, not far from the city where Velazquez was at work.³

¹ See Curtis, p. 18. Ribera's etching of his picture is dated 1628.

² Justi, p. 67.

³ Mr. Standish, in his "Seville and its Vicinity," tells us that the Dukes of Ossuna, or Osuna, had a palace in the parish of St. Catherine of the city of Seville.

Stirling-Maxwell is not less explicit on this point. Dealing with Velazquez's *bodegone* period he says: "an importation into Seville of pictures by foreign masters, and by Spaniards of other schools, drew his attention to new models of imitation, and to a new class of subject. Among them were pictures by Ribera which he began to imitate if not to copy." Among such new sources of inspiration it would not be surprising if some subject, even some design, by Ribera, had been available through which the young Velazquez, who at the epoch I am suggesting was only twenty-one years old, was encouraged and impelled to the important and scholarly composition of two years later, just as he is declared to have been inspired to "Los Borrachos" by Ribera's Naples picture of 1626. Now, if Sir Walter Armstrong is right in his belief that the picture belongs, in part at least, to 1633-1635,¹ the problem becomes in one direction more easy of solution, for Velazquez had by that time been welcomed to the companionship of his great compatriot and admitted to his studio, where works in all stages of design and progress would have been disclosed to his view.

One of the pictures which, in Stirling-Maxwell's words, Velazquez "began to imitate if not to copy"—but with fundamental modifications and re-arrangements—was "The Angels appearing to the Shepherds." It is apparently inspired by a smallish picture attributed to Spagnoletto which in 1778 was in the Dusseldorf Gallery (of which collection the major portion was removed to Munich in 1805). It measures 37 French inches in height by 47 in width. In this picture two figures are reclining on the

¹ Sir Walter Armstrong points to certain details as suggesting that, in his opinion, the picture was not completed, as he says, "at one continuous attack"; the floating angels, especially, he thinks, resemble the work of Velazquez in about 1633 and may have been put in over the dark background.

ground, and a third, attended by a dog, stands on the extreme right pointing to where a chubby angel is in flight beneath a floating drapery. The shepherd on the left looks to the right; he on the right, asleep, turns his body and inclines his head to the left of the picture. The scene takes place in full daylight and is set in the open air. There are, therefore, no strong contrasts of illumination, and apparently no particular vigour is displayed in the setting forth. The *motif* in the two pictures is similar, yet the general resemblance of the Dusseldorf picture to "The Angels appearing" is less striking than that which exists between Velazquez's "Breda" and Rubens's "Ferdinand, King of Hungary." The composition, too, is dissimilar; and, moreover, in suavity of line and harmony of design, the Dusseldorf picture appears unique in the work of Ribera.¹

Every student of the history of the Spanish school is aware of the inter-imitation practised by the leading group of painters at about this period. Ribera, who had copied Raphael and the Carracci, and then Correggio in Parma—closely imitating the last-named during the earlier part of his Italian career, and Caravaggio afterwards—and who in his "Silenus" was certainly inspired by Rubens's "Bacchanal" now in the Hermitage (just as "Silenus" was the forbear of "Los Borrachos") was himself a frequent source of inspiration. Zurbaran (?) imitated him, alike in conception and arrangement, in his masterpiece, "The Adoration of the Shepherds" in the National Gallery,² just as, in his

¹ It is matter for regret that this canvas cannot well be reproduced here, for the minute line engraving, by B. Hübner, is so small that it is almost covered by a postage-stamp. The present whereabouts of the picture is unknown to me.

² But see note, p. 10. This work, it will be remembered, was up to recent years accepted as a Velazquez. Sir Edmund Head, in 1848, believed it to be "a copy after Ribera and in close imitation of the style of that artist."

"Adoration of the Magi" at Grenoble, he presumably imitated the design and chief group of Velazquez's picture of the same subject now in the Prado—but without Velazquez's characteristically heavy draperies. Otherwise Velazquez must have imitated him—which from the standpoint of development of style cannot readily be believed. So, too, Murillo, a few years later, in his "Adoration" in the Vatican, imitated the National Gallery picture already alluded to. More than that, Murillo's "St. Peter in Prison," painted for the Hospital of La Caridad and now at the Hermitage, was actually described as a Ribera in the "Musée de Peinture" (iii, 178), there engraved as such by Reveil; while, *par revanche*, Ribera's "Ecce Homo" in the Academy of San Fernando in Madrid was engraved by Navarrete as a Murillo! And until the last edition of the Prado Catalogue the full-length picture of "The Repentant Magdalen" (No. 1,105) was classed as a Murillo, and has but recently been accepted as by Ribera, instead of an imitation by the young Sevillian who studied Ribera's work on his visit to Madrid in 1643. Plagiarism, it will be seen, was rife and unashamed. Velazquez, as has been shown, saw no harm in adopting for his "Breda" several striking details from Rubens's "Ferdinand, King of Hungary, and the Cardinal Infante." Just so Murillo made up his "Vision of St. Francis," at the Palazzo Bianca in Genoa, from Ribera's "Ecstasy of St. Francis" at the Prado (using the same head) and the angel from the same painter's "St. Jerome" at Naples; and in his design of "St. James the Greater" at Madrid practically repeated—merely reversing it—Ribera's "St. Simon" in the same gallery. Inter-imitation, therefore,

Justi declared it peculiarly Ribera-like in its details; but in 1860 Viardot, following the "Correo Nacional" of 1838, proclaimed its authorship as that of Zurbaran—which has since been generally acknowledged.

and similarity of subject and design, even identity of passages and of figures, is acknowledged to be a common characteristic of the School, especially in the first half of the seventeenth century.

[There are certain minor yet important characteristics of details which, in the determination of authorship, should not be overlooked. One of the most striking is the elongation of fingers, and toes as well, usually to be found in Ribera¹ and never, as far as I am aware, in Velazquez; another is the heaviness of draperies almost always seen in Velazquez (especially in his earlier pictures) and rarely in Ribera. Proof of these peculiarities is seen in many of the pictures of Ribera well known to the student.

IV

But to return to the little fluttering Messengers.

"Angels" of this type are Velazquez's own. They are, indeed, ascetic putti rather than angels, and but for their earnestness and lack of sensuous beauty, the picture—so little is it inspired by any touching religious emotion—might almost as well be entitled "Cupids announcing to Shepherds the Birth of Venus." They are wholly different from the rotund and poorly-constructed boy-angels that float in Ribera's important "Pietà" at Naples, and from the more playful and ill-imagined winged attendants, heavy and

¹ Compare, for example, at Dresden: "The Deliverance of St. Peter," "St. Agnes," "St. Andrew," and "The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence"; at Berlin, "St. Sebastian"; at the Prado, "The Penitent Magdalen," "Jacob receiving Isaac's Blessing," "St. Andrew," "The Deposition," "A Penitent Anchorite," and "The Ecstasy of St. Francis of Assisi"; at Milan, "St. Jerome"; the "St. Sebastian," "St. Jerome," and "Pietà" in the Naples Museum; and in the Louvre, "Christ at the Tomb," and "The Adoration of the Shepherds."

pudding-faced, which we see in the same painter's "Conception" in the Prado. They have nothing in common with the flying attendant in his "St. Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy" in the same museum, and still less, alike in conception, character, and treatment, with the full-grown floating angel that seeks to hinder the departure of Hagar in Prince Doria's picture by the same master. Zurbaran, too, believed in a celestial messenger of a more responsible type, as he shows in his "St. Bonaventura visited by an Angel" now in the Dresden Gallery. But in no case is there the kind of individuality which distinguished Velazquez; El Greco comes the closest, but even he bears no technical parallel to the powerful, firm, and masterly handling of the sort that characterizes the younger painter. It must also be observed that the drapery on which the little angels are hovering is strongly touched, chiefly about the edges, with that orange-yellow pigment which those who have studied Velazquez's palette commonly accept as a hall-mark of his work, so partial to it, as Justi reminds us, was the painter, and so often did he use it in his acknowledged pictures.

The painting of the sheep merits attention, not only because it offers some of the most masterly execution and silvery colour of the whole composition, but because of the somewhat remarkable representation of what is rather silky fur than wool. The unsurpassed power and felicity of Velazquez in the truthful and realistic rendering of animals—of horses and dogs—has been the theme of all writers and critics, de Beruete the latest of them. We here recognize equal life and truth in his painting of sheep. But their fleece is not the sheep's wool we see in Ribera's "Adoration of the Shepherds" in the Louvre, or in Zurbaran's (?) rendering of the same subject in the National Gallery; their silkiness corresponds with that which we meet with in many of the

sheep of Velazquez's fellow townsman, Murillo. That is to say, of the score or more of authentic pictures by Murillo into which sheep are introduced, about half present the silky, furry type: the "St. John" in the National Gallery may be cited in evidence. All of which points to the truth of the statement which has been made by artists who have painted in the south of Spain—that about Seville there exists now, as in the past, a breed of sheep distinguishable, as regards their skins, from the ordinary woolly kind: a type truthfully rendered by Velazquez and Murillo alike. It is interesting to learn that at Burton Park, near Petworth, is a flock of Spanish sheep approximating far more to the silky Sevillian breed that we see in "The Angels appearing" than to the woolly sheep of England.

V

As has been pointed out, the fact need not surprise us that no early documentary record of this picture is known to exist—other than the statement that it was in the possession of the ancient family of the del Aguilas before it was obtained from Don Julian Williams by Mr. Standish's agents; for, as de Beruete and others maintain, a number of Velazquez's pictures are known to have been lost and others destroyed by fire among those which had been inventoried, and several more entirely unrecorded. A prominent instance is the "Adoration of the Magi" in the Prado, here several times mentioned: it is not entered in the inventories of the Royal palaces and nothing of its history is known.¹ Another is the "Christ at the Column" (c. 1634) in the National Gallery, which, painted at a date corresponding to the hey-

¹ See Curtis, p. 6.

day of the artist's career and fame, had remained totally unsuspected by every writer up to the time of its sale in Madrid as late as 1860¹—three years before "The Angels appearing" vanished into the obscurity of the Ashburton Collection. Similarly, "Christ in the House of Martha" was so little known that it is said to have made its first acknowledged appearance in a London sale-room, when, so report has it, it was knocked down for the sum of five shillings.

After accepting all de Beruete's conclusions as to the authenticity, or the reverse, of the pictures he examined, or, including the lost pictures, admits the possibility of, there are not more than one hundred and thirty paintings accepted by him as constituting the entire achievement of Velazquez—a poor total (even though his official duties be taken into account) for a facile and industrious hand working throughout forty years and more; an average, that is to say, of no more than three and a fraction a year. It affords satisfaction, therefore, to add to the sum of the artist's known *œuvre* the masterpiece which has disappeared from the public ken for half a century past, and which after that prolonged period of obscurity, at last re-emerges into the light of day.

VI

It is not enough, in these latter days, when we look to *expertise*, highly specialized, to establish or sweep away the claim to authenticity of a work of art, that the authorities

¹ Not "1862 or 1863," as hazarded by de Beruete (p. 43) as the date of the acquisition of the picture by Lord Savile in Madrid. In the same year, 1860, the picture was lent to the Summer (Old Masters) Exhibition at the British Institution.

of a former day should have declared in favour of it. The acceptance of "The Angels appearing" as a genuine work of Velazquez by Julian Williams, Dr. Waagen, and Stirling-Maxwell, and others of their authoritative contemporaries, and of M. Lefort a few years ago, has therefore no longer quite the weight it enjoyed with a former generation. The attestation of art scholars of the highest authority of to-day becomes then of peculiar importance. Being, as we think, less indulgent and better equipped than their forerunners, the experts of the present day secure for their more scientific and reasoned decisions greater confidence than was reposed in those of former times. Special interest, therefore, belongs to the pronouncements of Dr. Mayer and Sir Walter Armstrong, among those of others.

DR. AUGUST L. MAYER, of the Alte Pinakotek, Munich—recognized as one of the greatest living authorities and regarded as natural successor to de Beruete on the works of Velazquez and the Spanish School—records thus his opinion, in a letter (here translated) dated from the Royal Old Pinakotek, 25 April 1913:

" . . . There is for me not the slightest doubt that the picture is an *incontestable, genuine* work by the hand of the young Velazquez. I believe that the 'Annunciation to the Shepherds' was painted by Velazquez at Seville in 1618 or 1619 but not later." [I have already given my reasons for postulating the date as 1622.] "There is very clearly seen in the naturalism, the manner of treatment of the lighting—and I suppose also the colour—but above all in all the upper part, the little angels, the strongly pronounced influence of Ribera. We know by the master and father-in-law of Velazquez, Pacheco, that Velazquez greatly admired Ribera, and your picture is a new and important proof of it.

"The technique of your picture reveals the very great resemblance with that of St. Peter in the Beruete Collection in Madrid."

SIR WALTER ARMSTRONG, Director of the National Gallery of Ireland, and author of "The Life of Velazquez," expresses an opinion strongly favourable to the authenticity of the picture although, in his view, the date of it cannot be so closely determined. As has been pointed out, this idea is the more interesting as by 1633 Velazquez had foregathered with Ribera in Naples. Sir Walter writes, under date 27 June 1913:

"So far as my opinion goes, your picture is an early Velazquez, dating in part, at least, from about 1633. Much of it seems to me almost cotemporary with the 'Christ on Cross' at Madrid, which I think must have been painted earlier than the date often given, namely, 1638. Your picture is, on the whole, in a very fine state, and I should call it one of the most important works of the master's early maturity."

The *provenance* of the picture and its history, based on such previous accounts as are available, may be summarized thus:

Said to have been in the Count del Aguila's Collection (which collection contained pictures acquired in the seventeenth century direct from the artist).

Bought thence, by Don Julian Williams, British Consul in Seville, acting as agent as well as collector.

Acquired from Mr. Williams by Mr. Frank Hall Standish, before 1830.

Bequeathed by Mr. Frank Hall Standish to King Louis-Philippe (1831, taking effect, 1841).

Lent by King Louis-Philippe to the Louvre, 1842.

Exhibited in the Gallery of the Louvre, 1842-1853.

Surrendered by the French Government to the heirs of the ex-King and sent to England, 1853.

- At the sale of the King's Collection at Christie's, 1853,
bought by the Rev. Walter Davenport Bromley.
- At the sale of the Davenport Bromley Collection at Christie's,
1863, bought by Lord Ashburton.
- At the sale of Lady Ashburton's (Melchet Court) Collection,
by Phillips, Son, and Neale, 1911, bought by the
Baron von Gründherr.
- At the sale at Christie's of "the property of a gentleman,"
said to be the Baron von Gründherr, 1912, bought by
Mr. M. H. Spielmann.

See Dr. Waagen: "Art Treasures in England," vol. iii, p. 380.

See Sir W. Stirling-Maxwell: "Annals of the Artists of Spain," 1848.

See Lefort: "Velazquez," Paris, 1888.

See Curtis: "Velazquez and Murillo," 1883, No. 7 in the *catalogue raisonné*.

See "La Revue de l'Art Ancien et Moderne," Paris, July 1913.

See "The Times," 15 August 1913.



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